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THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Scóip do Dhia an rna hárduib, agus píodcán aip an dtalam deagóil do na dáoinib.

LUKE ii. 14.

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THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION—DOCTOR CULLEN'S PASTORAL.

THE above long agitated question is not yet settled. But everything seems to indicate that it will be decided in the affirmative, and possibly soon.* Till then Roman Catholics are at liberty to discuss it.† But when once affirmed by the decree of the *infallible judge*, then, according to their doctrine, they can no longer deny, or even doubt it, without incurring the guilt of mortal sin. We sincerely believe that many pious and enlightened lay members of their communion intuitively shrink from the affirmative view.

We have already invited them to examine it in its full extent, and to declare their sentiments before it be too late—before their lips be closed for ever—before they be doomed, either to stile the suggestions of conscience, or to be decried as heretics.

We again earnestly direct their attention to the same inquiry. And we now propose to set before them some of the inevitable consequences of an affirmative decision. For this purpose we shall quote the language lately used by two of their own prelates.

Dr. Cullen, in his late pastoral, ordering "A Novena," in preparation for the festival of the "Immaculate Conception," publishes the following as his view on the subject:—

"As we are about to solemnize that which, among the Festivals of the Virgin, is the first in order, and which presents her to us, in a special manner, as the *immaculate and spotless spouse of the Most High*, with whose *perfection sin is incompatible*, it becomes her clients to remove from their hearts every trace of guilt, every affection to sin." . . . "This tender mother, destined to co-operate in the great work of our redemption, will listen to the cry which her children send forth from this valley of tears. She is waiting to be intrusted with their petitions. Let us, then, fly to her with confidence, reminding her, with St. Bernard, that it has never yet been heard, that any one who had recourse to her protection, invoked her aid, implored her intercession, was left by her unpitied and forsaken. The refuge of sinners, and the comfort of the afflicted, will have compassion on her children, will plead powerfully for their pardon, and *infallibly procure for them, if they be faithful to her, the rich treasures of Divine grace.*"

In the foregoing there is imputed to a mortal woman "a *perfection with which sin is incompatible*," a perfection befitting "the *immaculate and spotless spouse of the Most High*"—that is, nothing less than perfect holiness.

Perfect holiness cannot be ascribed to any created being. For "He putteth no trust in his saints, yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight." . . . "He putteth no trust in his servants, and his angels he chargeth with folly."†

According to the Scriptures, perfect holiness belongs only to the Sacred Trinity.

I. The Father is the "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty."* He is "the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy."† "Holy and reverend is his name."‡ "There is none holy as God."§ "Thou only art holy."|| This is assigned as a reason why all should worship him. "Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill, for the Lord our God is holy."|| "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy (*μόνος ὅστις*) for all nations shall come and worship before thee."**

II. The Son is styled "The Holy One and the Just,"†† and of him it is said—"He that is holy, He that is true."††

III. Of the Spirit it is only necessary to remark, that his special title is "The Holy Ghost."

Hence, it is manifest, that to represent the Virgin Mary as possessed of "sinless perfection," as "immaculate and spotless," is to raise her to a level with the Trinity, and to entitle her to share their worship and glory.

Thus, in the passages quoted above, she is represented as "co-operating in the great work of our redemption," as "listening to the cry which her children send forth from this valley of tears," and waiting to be intrusted with their petitions.

Nor is this propounded as a mere theory. Its practical consequences are enforced. We "are to fly to her, since it has never yet been heard that any one who had recourse to her protection was left by her unpitied and forsaken." She, "the refuge of sinners and the comfort of the afflicted, will have compassion on her children, will plead powerfully for their pardon, and *infallibly procure for them, if they be faithful to her, the rich treasures of Divine grace.*"

And as the Apostle forewarns those who draw nigh unto God that, "it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy," so Dr. Cullen tells the "clients" of the *immaculate and spotless spouse of the Most High*, that in solemnizing her marriage it becomes them "to remove from their hearts every trace of guilt, every affection to sin."

Lastly, Dr. Cullen tells us, that she "infallibly procures" for those that are faithful to her "the rich treasures of Divine grace."

The Archbishop of Freiburg has lately taken up the cause of the Pope against his Sovereign, and thus embroiled himself and his hierarchy in political difficulties and sufferings. He calls on both clergy and laity to join in prayers for succour in his distress.

"Unite yourselves, then, to us in prayer—in an incessant prayer for the Church, which suffers among us—in prayer to Almighty God, to the Father, who directs the hearts of the mighty like rivers of water—in prayer to the Eternal Son, who acts victoriously as the invisible chief of his Church—in prayer to the Holy Ghost, who is given as the consoler to the Church unto the end of ages—in prayer to the Holy Virgin, the good mother of *Divine graces*, who rejects none of those who implore her intercession in this valley of tears."

Here the faithful are ordered to pray to the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Virgin; nor is the slightest difference suggested as to the manner of praying to the different persons of this new Quaternity. The objects of supplication are, indeed, different; as they might be also, when the different persons of the Trinity are separately addressed. But the mode of addressing them, or, in other words, the worship offered, is the same to all.

Lastly, the Archbishop, as well as Dr. Cullen, ascribes to the Virgin an important office of the Holy Ghost, when he styles her "the good mother of *Divine graces.*"

Taking the announcements of both prelates as a sample of what is to be expected, when the doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception" shall be added to the creed of the Romish communion, the Virgin will be constituted the *spotless spouse* of the First Person of the Trinity, the *Immaculate Mother* of the Second, and the *Infallible Dispenser* of the *Graces* of the Third. What is this but to incorporate her with the Sacred Trinity—to identify her with Deity?!!! But can the decree of a poor mortal accomplish this? Or rather, must it not bring down vengeance

on those who, in this age of Scriptural knowledge, shall dare thus to tamper with the attributes of Deity?

Will enlightened Roman Catholics, then, remain passive, while priests and prelates are actively preparing the uneducated masses to acquiesce in the perpetration of this fatal crime? Will they wait till they must either break communion with their Church, or share in her guilt and condemnation? Would it not be wiser to save both themselves and her, or, at least, to endeavour to do so, by raising a manly and Christian protest against the affirmation of this long disputed doctrine?

ANCIENT TESTIMONIES ABOUT THE APOCRYPHA.

WE promised in our number, for November 1852, p. 126, column 2, to produce the evidence which all ages of the Church have left us, as to whether the six Apocryphal Books are really Scripture inspired by God. It was our first intention to give, on the one side the evidence against those books being Scripture, and on the other side what is produced as the evidence in favour of them; but, on consideration, we have resolved not to do so: for this reason; the evidence produced to prove that those books are really given by inspiration of God is so trifling, so utterly weak, that if we were to put it alongside of the evidence *against* those books, our readers might be tempted to think that we were not acting fairly; that we were purposely stating one side as strong as we could, and the other side as weak as we could. We, therefore, think it much better that the evidence in favour of those books should be stated by some Roman Catholic priest or layman, in our pages. Our readers will then be sure that each side is stated as strongly as it can be stated, and will be able to judge between them. We shall, therefore, give the evidence *against* those books being inspired, and we offer our pages to any Roman Catholic priest or layman, to state whatever evidence they can produce from the early ages of the Church in favour of the inspiration of those books.

I. The age of the Jews.

For this there is no witness equal to Josephus, himself a learned Jewish historian. And his testimony is this:—"We have only twenty-two books, containing the history of all time, which are deservedly believed in as divine: of these, five are the books of Moses, which contain both the laws and the account of the creation of man, up to his own death.....From the death of Moses to the time of Artaxerxes, who was king of the Persians after Xerxes, the prophets after Moses wrote the things done in their time, in thirteen books. The remaining four contain hymns to God, and precepts for the life of man. But from the time of Artaxerxes to our own time several have been written; but they were not worthy of like faith with those that went before, because there was not a certain succession of prophets. It is manifest, in fact, how we reverence our writings; for, such an age having already passed, neither any one has dared to add, nor to take away, nor to change. It is, as it were, implanted in all Jews from their birth to believe in these as the oracles of God....." (quoted in Eusebius Eccl. Hist., Book III., ch. 10).

It is clear from this that the *twenty-two books only* were the object of faith; that these only were esteemed by the Jews as the oracles of God; that the other books written after the time of Artaxerxes were not counted by the Jews as inspired.

These *twenty-two books* were the Old Testament, as it is in the *Protestant Bible*. The six apocryphal books in the Roman Catholic Bible were among those books written after the time of Artaxerxes. We need not dwell on this, as it is confessed on all sides. But we point attention to the real question, which is this—Those six books which were not counted inspired Scripture or the oracles of God by the Jews, up to the time of our Lord's coming—were those same books declared to be inspired Scripture by Christ and his Apostles?

II. The times of Christ and his Apostles.

We have some plain facts here.

1. Neither Christ nor his Apostles ever reproved the Jews for rejecting the apocryphal books out of their canon of Scripture; which they surely would have done, if those books had been given by divine inspiration.

* The Head of the Roman Catholic Church has already declared himself in favour of the doctrine. See the letter of Pius IX. to all the bishops in communion with the See of Rome, given at Cajeta, Feb. 2, 1849.—CATHOLIC LAYMAN, vol. i., p. 5.

† Ibid. See also page 20. ‡ Job xv. 15—iv. 18.

* Isaiah vi. 3—Revs. iv. 8. † Isaiah liv. 15. ‡ Ps. cxl. 9. § 1 Sam. ii. 2. || Revs. xv. 4. ¶ Ps. xcix. 9. ** Revs. xv. 4. †† Acts iii. 14. ¶¶ Revs. iii. 7.